

# **Bridging the SNAP Gap Act**

*Introduced by Senator Edward J. Markey (D-MA) and Representative Lori Trahan (D-MA-03)*

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides vital nutritional support for tens of millions of people. However, there are gaps in access to these essential benefits that make it harder for families and seniors to afford food. These gaps include:

**The SNAP Birthday Cliff for Students:** For students 17 years old or younger, their income from employment is excluded from their household's income, meaning they can contribute financially without negatively affecting their family's nutrition access. However, for students ages 18 to 21, they can continue to receive benefits as part of their household, but [their income is counted](#) towards the entire household's income. This also risks their whole household's eligibility for SNAP if the combined income passes the gross income thresholds. With [30% of all college students](#) experiencing food insecurity, particularly marginalized and first-generation students, this forces students to choose between income and food security.

**Medical Expense Deduction Limits:** Additionally, while seniors (65+) and disabled individuals who spend more than \$35 per month on health-related expenses [can deduct these expenses](#) from their monthly income for SNAP benefits, these deductions are not available to other SNAP beneficiaries. For many households, the cost of health care is a significant portion of their income, with households spending an average of [8.1%](#) of their income on health-related needs. The average out-of-pocket spending for households was [\\$81](#) (the median can range from [\\$35 to \\$125](#), depending on the state). The high cost of health care means that most households meet the \$35 threshold for medical expenses and would benefit from medical deductions. Even for qualified individuals, states' policies regarding medical expense deductions can also vary widely in the amount that is deductible and the amount of burdensome paperwork and receipts needed to receive them.

## **The Bridging the SNAP Gap Act would increase food security by:**

- **Raising the student income exclusion age from 17 to 21.** This would allow young people to continue to receive SNAP benefits as part of their parent(s) household without effecting the gross household income.
- **Expanding the expand medical deduction eligibility to all SNAP beneficiaries** who meet the \$35 threshold of monthly medical expenses; and
- **Setting the medical exemption floor to \$165:** This would allow people to receive a baseline exemption of \$165 instead of needing to complete the paperwork and verification requirements to establish how much they spend on medical expenses.

**Senate Cosponsors:** Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), John Fetterman (D-Pa.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), and Peter Welch (D-Vt.).

**House Cosponsors:** Representatives Stephen Lynch (MA-08), Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC), Hank Johnson (GA-04), Nydia Velazquez (NY-07), Rashida Tlaib (MI-13), Glenn Ivey (MD-4), Barbara Lee (CA-12), Danny Davis (IL-7), and Kevin Mullin (CA-15).

The Bridging the SNAP Gap Act is endorsed by: Hunger Free America, Bread for the World, Share Our Strength, Alliance to End Hunger, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Project Bread, The Greater Boston Food Bank, Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Merrimack Valley Food Bank, Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester, and Worcester Food Bank.

**Families should be able to put food on the table.**